

SOUTHWOOD LUTHERAN CHURCH
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
January 26, 2025

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Council President Brenda Semin.

Opening prayer: Pastor Jessica Kingsborough led the opening prayer.

Approval of the Agenda: It was motioned and seconded to approve moving the land resolution agenda item to follow the agenda approval. Motion carried.
It was motioned and seconded to approve the agenda. Motion passed.

Land Sale Resolution: Neal Lyons introduced the provisions of the proposed land sale. Brad Marshall from Olsson Associates addressed the congregation and presented the land sale proposal in detail. He also outlined the approval process to the congregation. Brad acknowledged that the proposal needed to be beneficial to Southwood and explained the benefits to our church. Questions from congregational members were answered by Brad specifically regarding the grading and drainage plans for the property. This will be the responsibility and expense of Olsson Associates. A question was asked regarding whether the council noted any cons to the land sale proposal. Brenda Semin shared that none were noted. After all questions were answered, a vote on the proposal was requested by Brenda Semin. It was motioned and seconded to approve the land sale. Motion carried.

Approval of minutes: It was motion and seconded to approve the minutes from the January 21, 2024 annual meeting. Motion carried.

Nominating Committee Report: Council Secretary and Nominating Committee Member Sharon Harms presented the candidates for election to the church council. Candidates presented were Amy Pfungsten, Dustin Reinbold, Brenda Semin, and Brian Stelzer. It was motioned and seconded to approve these candidates for church council positions. Motion carried.

Sharon Harms presented Jeff Maschka as a candidate for election to the Endowment Fund Trustees.
It was motioned and seconded to approve this candidate. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Neal Lyons presented the details of the treasurer's report for year end 2024. Southwood ended the year with \$559,224 cash on hand with a budget deficit of \$95,819 which indicates that we used \$95,819 of our cash in 2024.

Adoption of the 2025 Annual Budget:

Neal presented the proposed 2025 annual budget plan. Several questions were asked and answered during the budget discussion. It was noted that with the current pledged giving, this

budget shows a deficit of \$376,964 which would use up a significant amount of our \$559,224 cash on hand. Future budgets will need careful consideration to preserve cash on hand. It was asked and noted that the senior pastor salary and benefits are included in this budget. Neal shared that property insurance has increased significantly but felt it would not increase further in the near future. This expense has been built into the budget as well.

It was motioned and seconded to approve the 2025 budget. Motion carried.

Election of the 2025 Nominating Committee: Brenda Semin presented the candidates for election to the 2025 Nominating Committee. Candidates presented were Melanie Crocker, Tiffany Heng-Moss, Mike Jagadich, Matt Novosad, and Brenda Semin.

It was motioned and seconded to approve these candidates. Motion carried.

Election of Assembly Delegates: Brenda Semin presented the candidates for synod assembly delegates. Candidates presented were Deborah Ring and Brenda Semin.

It was motioned and seconded to approve these candidates. Motion carried.

Brenda also shared that there are additional spots available for assembly delegates if any congregational members are interested in attending. Members can reach out to Brenda or to Lori Changstrom in this regard.

Constitutional Amendments: Brenda Semin outlined the reason for the constitutional amendments and the history, structure, and requirements of the document. The provision regarding Facilities and Finance Committee is being withdrawn at this time to allow the council to have further discussion regarding the design of this committee. It was motioned and seconded to approve the constitutional amendments with the Facilities and Finance provision withdrawn. Motion carried unanimously with 121 affirmative votes.

Pastoral Candidate Update: Brenda Semin provided an update regarding the pastoral search and answered congregational questions. After multiple candidate interviews, a recommended senior pastor candidate has been presented to the church council and a decision has been made to move forward with this candidate. Currently, we do not have a timeline in place. The timeline will be established based upon what is best for the candidate and for Southwood. Brenda answered several questions regarding the process while maintaining confidentiality as is required.

President's Report:

Brenda reviewed the church council work throughout 2024.

This has been a busy year for the council as you can see from the previous agenda items. As a council we worked to address concerns brought by pastors, staff and congregation while maintaining the health of the church as an organization.

Some of the actions taken this year include reviewing our constitution as part of a review of our processes as an organization and the consideration of the offer to purchase land as shown in the previous items in today's meeting. In addition, the council reviewed topics such as our organizational structure, the best use of dental equipment in Honduras, the passing of the plate

at holidays in order to boost donations dedicated to missions, and other logistical decisions. The council made the decision to invest in staff with the addition of contracting with Lutz for HR consulting services including staff development and updating personnel policies. We engaged in conversations looking towards future possibilities for where God is calling us with the continuation of participation in the Vitality program conducted by the Nebraska synod as part of an ELCA initiative.

We also had conversations with congregation, staff and leadership of where our strengths lie as a congregation and where we have opportunities. We continue to have opportunities for growth in membership as the neighborhood and community around us grows. Our membership was slightly up in 2024 to 4184 from a membership of 4146 in 2023. I would like to point out that if you look at our membership back to 2017 there have been trends of ups and down over the years. The highest was in 2021 when there was a total membership of 4353. So, at this time we are just 169 members from the highest membership in the last eight years. As our community around us grows, we have opportunities to share who Southwood is and continue to invite others to join us in worship, service, and faith growth.

Another opportunity is to increase giving as discussed earlier in the Treasurer's report. I would encourage you this year to participate in the fundraisers that the Mission team is planning to support dedicated giving to missions. I would also ask you to consider continuing or increasing your financial support for the terrific staff and programming that we have at Southwood as our expenses continue to grow.

Finally, we have opportunities to find ways to communicate who we are inside and outside our walls as we find ways to continue to inspire each other and invite others to gather and hear where God is calling us.

All of these conversations have also shared our strengths and reinforced our goal as a church which is to Love God and Love Others. We are a congregation that still very much focuses on the importance of inviting others and being welcoming to everyone. We love worshipping together and we still deeply feel the importance of serving in our church, our community and with our partners in Honduras and Tanzania. We want to facilitate opportunities for faith growth for all ages from Sunday School, VBS, DELVE, adult classes, to our seniors that gather. You can also gather for faith growth in small groups, or groups based on common interests of which there are too many to list. Our worship is reaching people far outside our walls via online service and allows our members to stay in touch with service even while away. Southwood is still very much a vital church.

I can't thank the council enough for their time and dedication. I can't thank the pastors and staff enough for the opportunities this year to work and collaborate together. Most of all, I thank the congregation for your continued support and passion for Southwood. You are what makes us a church that continues to Worship, Grow, Give, Serve, and Invite. As we begin 2025, I am hopeful for the year ahead and have continued dreams for the next steps for Southwood. May we all continue to pray for God's guidance and the ability to share HIS love in the year ahead.

Following Brenda's report, Pastors Michael and Jessica were acknowledged and appreciated for their excellent work during our tenure without a senior pastor. They received a standing ovation for their continued dedication and support.

Adjournment: It was motioned and seconded to approve adjournment. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:44 pm.

Closing Prayer: Pastor Michael Ryan led the closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Harms